

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 070463
ORIGIN AF-10

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DRAFTED BY AF/W:EESVENDSEN:GAR
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 070463

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EINV, OVIP, (CARTER, PRESIDENT)

SUBJECT: BUSINESS INVESTMENT IN LIBERIA; USG ASSISTANCE
FOR THE 1979 OAU CONFERENCE

1. ON MARCH 13 AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE EMMETT HARMON AT HIS REQUEST CALLED ON AF/W DIRECTOR. THE PURPOSE OF HARMON'S VISIT WAS TWOFOLD. HE FIRST WISHED TO KNOW IF THERE WERE ANY KIND OF "AGREEMENT" AMONG U.S. BUSINESSMEN TO DISCOURAGE U.S. PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN LIBERIA. WE SAID NO, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT THE LIBERIA REFINING COMPANY (LRC) SITUATION WAS CAUSE FOR CONCERN AND SHOULD BE RESOLVED ASAP. HARMON STATED THAT THERE WERE FOUR CASES DETRIMENTAL TO LIBERIA'S GOOD IMAGE AS AN INVESTMENT SITE: LRC, VANPLY, LIBERIA MINING COMPANY (LMC), AND LIBERIA IRON AND STEEL CORPORATION (LISCO). HE SAID THE TOLBERT ADMINISTRATION WAS ACUTELY AWARE IT HAD ATTRACTED NO MAJOR INVESTMENT TO LIBERIA IN SEVEN YEARS, AND WONDERED IF ITS INVESTMENT LAWS WERE TOO RESTRICTIVE. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD RECENTLY INFORMED UNIROYAL OF A GOL
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DECISION THAT ITS BASIC CONCESSION AGREEMENTS WOULD NOT BE RENEGOTIATED, AND STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT THIS POSITION WAS ADOPTED AT HIS, HARMON'S, URGING. WE SAID THAT LIBERIA HAS A BASICALLY POSITIVE REPUTATION AMONG U.S. BUSINESSMEN. WE STRESSED THE POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS ECOWAS TO COUNTRIES LIKE

LIBERIA.

2. HARMON'S OTHER CONCERN WAS WHETHER PRESIDENT TOLBERT SHOULD REVIEW THE GOL'S REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO PREPARE MONROVIA FOR THE OAU MEETING IN 1979 WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. WE REPLIED THAT WE WOULD NOT PRESUME TO SUGGEST WHAT TOLBERT SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT RAISE, BUT NOTED THAT EXISTING AID LEGISLATION RESTRICTED THE PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO BE FORTHCOMING. HARMON SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THIS WAS THE CASE, AND THAT HE DID NOT WANT HIS PRESIDENT TO RAISE THE ISSUE IF HE WOULD BE EMBARRASSED BY THE ANSWER.

3. HARMON SAID HE WOULD LEAVE NEW YORK CITY FOR EUROPE ON MARCH 15, AND RETURN TO LIBERIA IN TIME FOR THE ADVANCE PLANNING OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT.

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